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THE 100-HOUR WAR WITH IRAQ: COULD IT HAVE BEEN LONGER?
A CLAUSEWITZIAN ANALYSIS OF THE CULMINATING POINT OF VICTORY

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Operations Department.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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reminiscent of Vietnam (a potentially long term commitment with no guarantee of achieving the desired end state). All these factors would have caused the United States to exceed the culminating point of victory before taking its first step toward Baghdad.

ABSTRACT

THE 100-HOUR WAR WITH IRAQ: A CLAUSEWITZIAN ANALYSIS OF THE CULMINATING POINT OF VICTORY

The question of whether or not the Gulf War with Iraq *could* have been significantly prolonged to topple Saddam Hussein and/or destroy his war-making capability without exceeding the culminating point of victory is addressed utilizing Carl Von Clausewitz's writings in *On War* as a framework for analysis. Factors that affect the relative combat strength of two warring factions other than firepower (i.e., political alignments, logistics and will), are analyzed in order to provide future operational commanders insight into those factors that also affect the relative strength between his and the enemy's forces. The analysis deals strictly with determining if or when the culminating point of victory would have been exceeded given the new and greater political objectives. It does *not* attempt to determine whether or not the political objectives *should* have been changed. Analysis shows that prolonging the war for more than one or two days (1) would have caused the coalition to fracture (leaving the United States to fight on virtually alone), (2) would not have been logistically sustainable (particularly given the certain withdrawal of Saudi Arabia), and (3) risked plunging the United States into a situation reminiscent of Vietnam (a potentially long term commitment with no guarantee of achieving the desired end state). All these factors would have caused the United States to exceed the culminating point of victory before taking its first step toward Baghdad.

PREFACE

The fall of Saddam Hussein and the destruction of his war-making capability may not have been unwelcome had they occurred as a result of the war between the coalition and Iraq, or a continued offensive campaign into Iraq, but they were not among the stated political objectives of the war. In fact, according to Commander Tom Gallagher, assigned to the Joint Staff (J-5, Political-Military Branch) during Operation Desert Storm and heavily involved with strategy and decision-making aspects of the war, there was never any intent to destroy Iraq as a nation. To do so have produced a destabilizing effect on the balance of power in the region.

Given these facts, then, which clearly indicate we shouldn't have and wouldn't have changed our political objectives, why this paper? Is it strictly "an academic exercise?" A "What if..." drill? The answer, of course, is no! The questions of why we didn't go to Baghdad to get Hussein or why we didn't crush the Iraqi Army when we had the chance have been asked, and will continue to be asked, many times by many people (including my wife, whose insistence that we should have "gotten" Hussein prompted this effort). This paper will illustrate why we couldn't, and therefore shouldn't, have gone further. It will also show current and future operational commanders that there is more involved in determining relative combat strength than just firepower. Clearly the United States far exceeded Iraq in quantity and quality of weaponry, and in trained personnel to

operate those weapon systems. But there are other, less obvious factors of which the commander must be aware and which he must recognize to ensure his forces do not surpass the culminating point of victory prior to achieving the objective.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"It is not possible in every war for the victor to overthrow his enemy completely. Often even victory has a culminating point."¹

- Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*

Background. A little over two years have passed since United States and Coalition forces evicted Saddam Hussein's forces from tiny Kuwait. It was a resounding military victory for the coalition and devastating defeat for Saddam and his forces. Or was it? Saddam Hussein continues his tyrannical rule over Iraq; his badly beaten but still effective forces were able to resume their role in the brutal suppression of the Kurds in northern Iraq and the Shi'ite Moslems in the south, prompting further U.S. and allied intervention in the form of Operations Provide Comfort and Southern Watch; and he continues to express his desire to reclaim Kuwait, Iraq's 19th province. As a result, many questioned then, and still question, whether or not the war was ended too soon - the suggestion being that the war should have been prolonged until Saddam was toppled and/or the war making capability of his military machine crushed. There appears to have been "a clear disjunction between U.S. public appeals to the Iraqi people to topple Saddam and the decision to terminate the war at the 100-hour point, with the resultant escape of the Republican Guard. For, while the former implied U.S. support for an uprising, the latter effectively doomed it from the start."²

The debate over whether or not the Coalition *should* have changed its objectives and prolonged the war must begin by asking whether or not the coalition *could* have significantly prolonged the war to achieve these new objectives without surpassing Clausewitz's culminating point of victory - the point at which the attacker's strength has diminished to where it is equal to that of the defender.

Purpose. The purpose of this paper is twofold. Primarily, it is to determine whether or not the coalition could have significantly prolonged the war to achieve its new objectives. In other words, when the cease fire was called, had it reached the culminating point of victory in its war with Iraq, or could it have gone farther?

A secondary purpose is to illustrate several not so obvious factors the operational commander must consider, recognize and apply in his advance to ensure he doesn't surpass the culminating point of victory before achieving the assigned objective. In today's complex political-military environment, firepower is but one factor that the commander must weigh when comparing the relative combat strength of his forces with that of the enemy and in determining whether or not the culminating point of victory has been reached. Operation Desert Storm provides an excellent opportunity for the operational commander to study these factors. In a complete rout of the enemy, as was the case in Desert Storm, it is very easy for the operational commander and his troops to catch victory fever, press on without purpose and unknowingly

surpass the culminating point. Worse yet would be to change the objective(s) based solely on the military successes thus, in many cases, exceeding the culminating point of victory before even beginning the new offensive. Although General Schwartzkopf must have been tempted to continue the rout, he wisely reported to his superiors that *the original objectives had been achieved* and recommended that the fighting stop.

Methodology. In his chapter on the culminating point of victory, Clausewitz discusses a number of principal causes for the attacker gaining and losing strength in an advance which provide an excellent framework for conducting an analysis of the Gulf war.⁴ Although all of these causes applied to the Gulf War to varying degrees, this author has categorized the majority into three categories; political alignments, logistics and will. These were the most significant and relevant and are the focus of this analysis.

Thesis. This paper will show that although the Coalition had inflicted major damage to the Iraqi forces with absolutely minimum coalition casualties, significantly prolonging the war would have caused it to surpass its culminating point of victory in its campaign to remove Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Utilizing Clausewitz's writings as a framework for analysis, it can be shown that any further military action (beyond a day or two) by the coalition to achieve the new objectives of destroying the Iraqi military machine and/or toppling Saddam would have failed for several reasons.

First, given the new objectives, the coalition would not have held together. The regional powers, primarily Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Egypt, would not have stood for such action. Although Saddam represented an obvious threat to regional security, the total disintegration of his country would have presented the region with other problems resulting from a serious shift in the balance of power. This shift would lead to new Kurdish and Shi'ite related problems as well as the resurrection of the specter of Iranian hegemony in the region. Continued French and British involvement was a question, as well. Based on the personal relationships between its leaders and the historical political relationships of these countries, it is safe to say that the British would have continued to fight with the U.S., but not the French. Though not a part of the coalition per se, the Former Soviet Union (FSU) presented President Bush with a unique and far reaching problem. Although military intervention on the Iraqi side was a concern, the President's main anxiety stemmed from the strain that a continued offensive would have on evolving Post Cold-War relations between the two countries, particularly at such a critical time for President Gorbachev.

Logistics would have presented another problem with significantly prolonging the war. If not politically popular, sustaining offensive operations for a few more days in and around the Kuwaiti Theater of Operation (KTO) was logistically possible. But an immediate pursuit operation or a full scale invasion deep into Iraq were not. Logistics planning had been predicated on

the objective of forcing Iraqi forces to withdraw from Kuwait, not on an invasion of Iraq. Such a radical change in objective would have necessitated a pause to develop a new logistics plan. And given the almost certain withdrawal of Saudi Arabia from the coalition, that plan would have to remedy the loss of key Saudi logistic support. Clausewitz's suggestion that the attacker can gain strength by living off captured enemy supplies and resources would not have applied in Iraq. Although there were some resources (transportation equipment, ammunition, and fuel) that advancing forces could have utilized, it would not have been enough to outweigh the loss of the Saudi support.

And finally, continued military action, particularly a march on Baghdad, risked plunging the United States into another "Vietnam-type quagmire, which was the consequence of fighting a largely guerilla war in difficult terrain and under unfavorable political conditions."⁵ A protracted and costly conflict, followed by a potentially long term occupation, would have severely tested American will and determination. Although troop morale and motivation were high and the American public generally in favor of going on to Baghdad at the time of the cease fire, it is uncertain how long such support and enthusiasm would have lasted. The U.S. also needed to be concerned with the Iraqi military and public reaction to an invasion of their country. Though defeated and demoralized, the potential for an increase in Iraqi will (whether as a result of patriotism, hatred of the U.S., or a threatening Saddam) could not be ignored.

CHAPTER II

POLITICAL ALIGNMENTS

"Some allies are lost to the defender, others turn to the invader..."

[or],

*The danger threatening the defender will bring allies to his aid."*⁶

- Clausewitz, *On War*

The Primacy of Politics. The politics of the Gulf War, as it is with any war, was by far the most critical factor in determining whether or not the culminating point of Operation Desert Storm had been reached. Since Iraq had virtually no allies to lose, Clausewitz's first statement above with respect to losing strength does not apply.⁷ But Iraq certainly stood to gain, and the U.S. to lose, strength from fracture of the coalition. Clausewitz further elaborates on this cause for the attacker losing strength:

"the changes in political alignments...resulting from his victories, are likely to be to the disadvantage of the victor...in direct proportion to his advance. All depends on the existing political affiliations, interests, traditions, lines of policy, and the personalities of princes, ministers,.....and so forth. If,...the defeated state is smaller [than the attacker], protectors will appear much sooner if its very existence is threatened. Others who may have helped to endanger it will detach themselves if they believe that the success is becoming too great."⁸

The Regional Powers. Clausewitz's statement regarding the detachment of those who helped endanger the defender if the success becomes too great is right on the mark in this case. Though the allies (particularly the immediate Gulf states) would not have been unhappy with the fall of Saddam, "few wanted to see

the dismemberment of his country"⁹ for various reasons. Turkey, Syria and Iran (though Iran was not part of the coalition), for example, were concerned with the Kurdish minorities in each other's countries who, given the defeat of Saddam and his resultant loss of control over the Iraqi Kurds, might try to "carve off a piece of [Saddam's] domain."¹⁰ The Saudis, Kuwaitis and other smaller Gulf states had a similar fear that a successful rebellion of the Shi'ites in southern Iraq might lead to that region becoming a part of Iran. In fact, Iranian hegemony in the region, which had led these same states to back Iraq in the Iran-Iraq war, was again becoming a real fear. It was for these reasons, primarily, that President Bush came under intense pressure from the Arab states (primarily Saudi Arabia and Egypt) to avoid any actions that would "precipitate the breakup (or 'Lebanonization') of Iraq...the day might come when the United States, the West, and the Gulf Arabs would need Iraq, once again, as a counterweight to Iran (and to Syria, which had been the principal perpetrator of the 'Lebanonization' of Lebanon)."¹¹

In addition to the ramifications discussed above, Arab cultural ties would also have precluded Arab members of the coalition from continued fighting with the Iraqis once they withdrew from Kuwait. Quick to punish Saddam for attempting to redraw the post-World War I borders, they were equally quick to stop the punishment of a fellow Arab once he had paid for his crime. This notion of Arab brotherhood most likely was the reason (1) for the refusal of Syrian and Egyptian forces to fight

in Iraq (in fact, according to General Schwartzkopf, "no Arab forces ever entered Iraqi territory"¹²); (2) that Arab, not Western, troops were to be the first to enter Kuwait City; and (3) that Iraqi prisoners of war were to be turned over to the Saudis.

General Schwartzkopf himself was convinced that "had a decision been made to invade all of Iraq and capture Baghdad, the coalition that we worked so hard to preserve would have fractured."¹³ General Schwartzkopf also reminds us that

"...we should not forget how Saddam tried to characterize the entire war. He was quick to proclaim that this was not a war against Iraq's aggression in Kuwait, but rather the western colonialist nations embarking as lackeys of the Israelis on the destruction of the only Arab nation willing to destroy the state of Israel. Had the United States and the United Kingdom alone attacked Iraq and occupied Baghdad, every citizen of the Arab world today would be convinced that what Saddam said was true."¹⁴

In the end, King Fahd and President Mubarak agreed that "the territorial integrity of Iraq had to be preserved at all costs. Failing the ouster of Saddam...both...said that they were prepared to live with the Iraqi despot..."¹⁵ President Bush also came to realize that he might have to live with Saddam still in power as he came under increased pressure in the United States for its conduct near the end of the conflict.¹⁶ While the combat power of the lost coalition members would have had a negligible affect on the military capability of the U.S. to further prosecute the war, the loss of regional, as well as world, political support would have been devastating.¹⁷

Britain and France. General Schwartzkopf not only foresaw the loss of the Arab members of the coalition in an invasion of Iraq, but he was "equally convinced that the only forces that would have participated in those military actions would have been British and American. Even the French would have withdrawn from the coalition."¹⁸ If Britain was one of "the most stalwart of the allies of the United States, France was the most problematic."¹⁹ The French government had been slow to join the coalition for two reasons. First, the French complained that they not been properly consulted during the affair and were being dragged in to the war. A second cause for their hesitation was a large Arab population in France that reflected pro-Saddam and anti-American sentiment. However, the French eventually overcame their reluctance, fell in line with the Coalition, and "acquitted themselves well"²⁰ once the fighting started. Still, that was no guarantee that they would have stayed on given the new objectives. According to Dr. Robert Wood, Dean of Naval Warfare Studies at the Naval War College, the French would have been uncomfortable in a role that would have made them subservient to the U.S. Participating as part of a coalition under UN auspices was one thing, but fighting for the Americans would have been quite another.²¹

The Former Soviet Union. The FSU presented another problem for the U.S. that weighed heavily against a continued assault on the Iraqis: the newly emerging post-Cold War relationship between the two superpowers.

President Gorbachev's position on the Gulf War was coming under increasing pressure from within the FSU, primarily from two factions. First, the military was growing increasingly concerned with "the Soviet Union's principal adversary, the United States, pummeling a long time Soviet ally, Iraq,...and decimating a military establishment that was made up largely of Soviet equipment - MIGs, T-72 tanks, and the suddenly famous Scud surface-to-surface missiles."²² Before the devastating ground offensives had even started, Marshal Sergei Akhromeev, Gorbachev's advisor on military affairs, stated publicly that (in obvious reference to the air campaign) "the allied operation contravenes the UN resolutions, which are concerned only with the liberation of Kuwait. 'Strikes...are being launched against the people and the Iraqi economy. This cannot be tolerated any longer.'²³ Gorbachev himself warned as early as the 9th of February that "the war was taking on 'an ever more alarming and dramatic scope' and that the U.S.-led alliance was in 'danger of exceeding the mandate' of U.N. Security Council resolutions, *which set the goal of reversing Iraq's invasion of Kuwait* (emphasis added)."²⁴

If all the pre-ground campaign rhetoric was cause for concern regarding US-FSU relations, a statement by Gorbachev on the 26th of February, two days after the ground campaign started, certainly weighed heavily in ending the war in such a way as to not further jeopardize the already strained relations. In a speech to factory workers in Minsk, Gorbachev "expressed alarm

over the 'fragility' of U.S.-Soviet relations and hinted broadly that unless the coalition leaders showed 'responsible behavior,' by which he clearly meant restraint, relations between Washington and Moscow would be in serious jeopardy."²⁵

Gorbachev was also under pressure from the Islamic republics in Transcaucasia and Central Asia. He could not easily ignore their protests of his support for the coalition during a time in his country when glasnost, democratization and secessionism were the current rage. As early as January 1991, Soviet Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh clearly articulated to President Bush and Secretary of State Baker that pressure was on Gorbachev "to be seen as making every effort to end the war as quickly as possible and with as little further destruction to Iraq."²⁶

The emerging post-Cold War relations between the US and FSU clearly played a large part in the U.S. decision to terminate the war when it did. In the end, President Bush "cared more about saving Gorbachev than about finishing off Saddam Hussein."²⁷

Another factor that must be considered with respect to the FSU's involvement has to deal with providing intelligence to Iraqis. There has been speculation that the Russians showed Iraq information showing coalition preparations in a last minute attempt to convince Saddam to withdraw from Kuwait before a ground campaign began - apparently to no avail since Iraq did nothing to counter the impending left hook attack.²⁸ If true, then the Russians would have certainly continued to supply

intelligence information to the Iraq's in the event of continued U.S. military action.

Conclusion. President Bush could have prolonged the fighting for another day or two without straining U.S. relations with the Gulf nations and the FSU so much that they would snap. But, in the end, he decided the risk of fighting even another day or two wasn't worth the political fallout, and called an end to the war.

CHAPTER III

LOGISTICS

"The defender's loss of fixed assets such as magazines, depots, bridges, and the like, is not experienced by the attacker. The defender's loss of ground, and therefore resources, from the time we enter his territory [contributes to the attacker's strength]. The attacker benefits from the use of these resources..."

[or],

*The invader moves away from his sources of supply, while the defender moves closer to his own. This causes delay in the replacement of his forces."*²⁹

- Clausewitz, On War

The Haves and the Have Nots. There is no disagreement that the majority of Iraqi forces in the KTO were ill-supplied. That they hung on for so long despite inadequate food, water and medical supplies is remarkable. Once coalition forces completed the "Hail Mary" envelopment, cutting off any hopes of resupply, the fate of the Iraqi forces in the KTO was sealed. Coalition forces, on the other hand, suffered no shortages thanks to the Herculean efforts by those involved with the logistics build up, and the brevity of the war and overall lack of resistance by the Iraqi's.³⁰ But how much longer could offensive operations be sustained in the KTO? And could the coalition have launched and sustained an invasion into Iraq and even marched on Baghdad?

Sustainment in the KTO. Conflicting assessments from various sources make answering the first question difficult. But, it appears that offensive operations in the KTO could have been sustained for a few more days on stocks already prepositioned at the forward logbases, with fuel being the

limiting factor. The Department of Defense's final report to Congress states that:

"Logistics units were hard-pressed to keep up with the rapid pace of maneuver units. Both logistics structure and doctrine were found wanting in the high tempo offensive operation. HET [Heavy Equipment Transports] and off-road truck mobility were limited, and MSRs [Main Supply Routes] into Iraq few and constricted. Had the operation lasted any longer, maneuver forces would have outrun their fuel and other support."³¹

However, according to Lt. General Pagonis, in charge of the entire logistics buildup in Saudi Arabia as commanding general of the 22nd Support Command in Saudi Arabia, at the time of the cease fire, the forward logbases that were supplying the XVIII ABN (Airborne) Corps and VII Corps (the main forces executing the left hook envelopment) were stocked with 29 days of supply (DOS) of food, almost 6 DOS of fuel, and over 65 DOS of ammunition.³² The truth to how long the war could have been sustained in the KTO with resources at the forward logbases probably lies somewhere in between. The general consensus, however, was that fuel would have been the limiting factor.

Impact of Lost Saudi Support. Given the new objectives of destroying the Iraqi military and/or toppling Saddam, the answer to the second question, (Could a prolonged campaign deep inside Iraq have been sustained long enough to achieve the new goals?) the answer is no. This assessment is based on the withdrawal of Saudi Arabian support (for reasons stated in Chapter II) which would have deprived the fighting forces the necessary sustainment support critical to conducting such an ambitious campaign. The U.S. would, in essence, be virtually on its own.

Or could the U.S. have done it without Saudi support? According to Clausewitz, the attacker gains strength by utilizing captured defender's resources. Could the U.S., then, have been able to utilize captured Iraqi resources in conjunction with resources it already had stockpiled in Iraq to sustain such an offensive?

General Pagonis saw the utility in capturing Iraqi resources. Stealing a page from the playbook of Alexander the Great, who was very adept at using captured enemy resources, he developed a team which began, in September 1990, to locate Iraqi depots, oil refineries, railheads, and other logistics-related resources and determine which and how those resources could be used by the coalition forces. For instance, both armies used the same type of fuel. Obtaining Iraqi fuel, thought Pagonis, could lead to a wider range of offensive strategies.³³ Major General McCaffrey, commander of the 24th Infantry Division (Mech), also recognized the importance of capturing enemy resources for his own forces use. On the leading edge of the left hook envelopment, he was bringing enough fuel with him in a huge logistics tail behind him. But he was hauling most of it in HEMTTs (heavy expanded-mobility tactical trucks) which themselves required huge amounts of fuel and, therefore, ordered his artillery gunners not to shoot Iraqi tank trucks or POL dumps or gas stations along the road. He told them "We just might need the fuel too, and anyone who blows it up will answer to me."³⁴

While there is certainly utility in capturing enemy resources, the brevity of the war left it unclear whether or not General Pagonis' and General McCaffrey's efforts would have been sufficient to enable the US to conduct a significantly prolonged offensive. Nor is it clear how useful enemy munitions and other equipment would have been. Perhaps General McCaffrey and Colonel Paul Kern, commander of 2nd Brigade, gave us a hint to the answer to that question. Within hours of locating a huge Iraqi stockpile of fuel-air bombs at Jalibah airfield inside Iraq, Kern had them destroyed them. Later, McCaffrey indicated that it would take a week to destroy all the ammunition dumps and military supplies around the airfield.³⁵ Destroying captured enemy munitions conveys the message that they were either not needed...or not wanted. Lt. Colonel Dave Oberthaler, Logistics Staff Officer with the 24th Infantry Division (Mech) in the KTO, also raises a valid concern with regard to captured Iraq fuel, food and drink - indicating that fear of contamination would have kept U.S. forces from using them. He also points out another problem with relying on captured enemy equipment. Often the destruction of that enemy equipment is a high priority. For example, captured Iraqi transportation equipment (primarily HETs), would have been very useful to U.S. ground forces. However, these units were also a top priority target for the coalition air forces.³⁶

The brevity of the war also left unanswered the effectiveness of additional logbases deep inside Iraq. General

Pagonis had planned for four additional logbases in Iraq to be activated if the conflict dragged on. Placed 90 miles apart and (roughly) along a line perpendicular to a line running from Kuwait City to Baghdad, Logbases Oscar and Romeo would supply XVIII ABN Corps and Logbases Hotel and November would support VII Corps. But due to the rapid and spectacular success of the war, these bases were never tested. In fact, Logbases Oscar and November ended up being used only as trailer transfer points for relatively small lots of ammunition and fuel.³⁷

The main supply depots and routes for getting these supplies to all of the forward logbases, however, originated inside Saudi Arabia. And given the likelihood Saudi Arabia would not support a campaign into Iraq, the main supply source and distribution routes for these forward logbases would have been lost. Loss of Saudi support would also have meant the loss of HETs and their drivers, material handling equipment (i.e., forklifts, mobile cranes, etc.) and their operators, and refrigeration vans so critical in the desert environment, since the majority of these items and services were contracted from the Saudis.³⁸ Colonel Oberthaler agrees that such an advance without Saudi support would have been impossible. He further suggests that Bahrain, another logistically important country in the region, might have withdrawn its support, compounding the resupply and sustainment problem.³⁹

Conclusion. All of which leads to Clausewitz's appropriate metaphoric prediction that

"...a conquering army is like the light of a lamp; as the oil feeds it sinks and draws away from the focus, the light diminishes until at last it goes out altogether."⁴⁰

In the final analysis, it can be stated, with a fair amount of confidence, that without Saudi support, the U.S. could have prolonged the war for no more than a few days under optimal conditions (i.e., continued limited resistance by Iraqi forces and continued Saudi support).

CHAPTER IV

WILL

"The enemy loses his inner cohesion and the smooth functioning of all components of his force. [and] Finally, the defender is discouraged, and so to some extent disarmed..."

[or],

*...the defender, being in real danger makes the greater effort, whereas the efforts of the victor slacken off."*⁴¹

- Clausewitz, On War

The Iraqis. There is no argument that the Iraqi military was soundly defeated and in great disarray at the time the war ended. The inner cohesion and smooth functioning that Clausewitz talks about was clearly gone from the Iraqi Army. They were indeed discouraged and disarmed. Morale was horrendously low as a result of the allied bombings and shortages of food, water and other supplies. Many defected despite threats of execution and reprisals against their families - whom they hadn't heard from in months. Many were inadequately trained, armed and prepared to fight. Some had received only six months of military training while others were war-weary veterans of the Iran-Iraq war.⁴² Countless stories of grateful Iraqi troops surrendering to American and allied soldiers illustrated that the Iraqi Army hardly presented an immediate threat. However, as Clausewitz points out:

*"Sometimes stunned and panic stricken, the enemy may lay down his arms, at other times he may be seized by a fit of enthusiasm: there is a general rush to arms, and resistance is much stronger after the first defeat than it was before. The information from which one must guess at the probable reaction include the character of the people and the government, the nature of the country, and its political affiliations."*⁴³

Reaction of the Iraqi troops and people to a continued attack is difficult to determine. But an increase in troop motivation and will and Iraqi public support of the effort (whether genuine or coerced) cannot be dismissed. The Iraqi troops may not have been very motivated or prepared to fight to keep Kuwait, but they may have been more than willing to defend their own country against the invading infidels. In their war with Iran they showed great determination in defending their country, including a willingness to use chemical weapons. The fact that Iraq did not use chemical weapons against the coalition in its defense of Kuwait in no way guaranteed the it would not use them in defense of Iraq.

Additionally, a continued offensive or invasion by the West quite possibly would have strengthened Hussein's position and stature with his people and the rest of the arab world.

The Americans. At the time of the cease fire, U.S. troops appeared to be ready for more action. One journalist depicts the mood of at least one group of U.S. troops as such:

"Rumbling northeast across the desert were a dozen giant military convoys. Hundreds of vehicles filled with fuel, missiles and grinning U.S. troops who had heard the news were still heading north. Some of the dusty trucks and tanks had American flags strapped to their antennas. Many carried home-made signs. 'First to Baghdad Buys the Beer!' read one."⁴⁴

Another journalist, with the 24th Infantry Division, reports that "if the men of the 24th Mech have any regrets, it is that their amazing charge was halted just short of total victory."⁴⁵

Whether or not the high morale and determination of the U.S. troops could have been sustained is unknown. Strong American

political and military leadership would have gone far in maintaining the morale and fighting spirit of our troops against the villainous Saddam. But, again, one cannot ignore Clausewitz when he says

"...one should be conscious of the slackening of effort that not infrequently occurs on the part of the victor after the danger has been overcome, and when, on the contrary, fresh efforts are called for to follow up the victory...we will doubtless conclude that the utilization of the victory, a continued advance in an offensive campaign, will usually swallow up the superiority with which one began or was gained by the victory."⁴⁶

Vietnam Baggage. It is now necessary to address the character of the American people and government, and nature of our country to try to determine whether or not the American public would have maintained support for a continued offensive campaign.

Short, decisive wars with minimal casualties is the legacy of Vietnam. Americans have come to tolerate nothing less. But tight security around Saddam coupled with his uncanny ability to survive would have resulted in anything but a short and decisive war to achieve the new objectives.⁴⁷ Despite the pain and torment suffered by the Iraqi people at the hands of Saddam Hussein, the hardships caused by the ongoing economic embargo, the physical and emotional damage caused by air campaign, and covert U.S. actions within Iraq to topple him politically, Saddam continues to rule. Further pounding of Iraq at the hands of the West could not guarantee his downfall. Thus, with the prolonged conflict would come the risk of higher U.S. casualties and

declining public support for the war. The U.S. would also be faced with the responsibilities that would have accompanied the occupation of Iraq, a responsibility of which the administration was keenly aware.⁴⁸ In summary:

"The U.S. public will support a war for a just cause, even one that may promise high casualties, as the Gulf War conceivably did in the autumn and early winter of 1990. They will withdraw their support when there does not appear to be an end in sight."⁴⁹

Some insight into the American public's support for a continued campaign can be gained by studying several Gallup polls conducted between early February and early April, 1991. In a poll taken 7-10 February (two weeks before the ground campaign started), 62% of the respondents indicated that the allies should keep fighting to remove Saddam or destroy his war making capability. Support of those goals rose to 72% in a subsequent Gallup poll taken 24 February (the day the ground campaign began). But that support was "soft". During the 24 February poll, the majority of respondents (59%) expected that the war would be short (14% expected it to be days; 45% weeks) and 61% thought it would be relatively painless (10% expected less than 100 casualties; 31% expected several hundred; and 20% up to 1,000).⁵⁰ Additionally, immediately after the cease-fire, in a 28 February - 3 March Gallup poll, only 46% of the respondents felt the war ended too soon while 49% felt that it should not have continued. But, one month later, a 4-6 April Gallup poll showed 56% felt the war ended too soon while only 36% felt that it should not have continued.⁵¹ One possible explanation for

this change in heart between 3 March to 4 April is that immediately after the war, the American public probably felt (since that is what they were being told) Saddam and his army had been soundly defeated and posed no further menace in the region. One month later, however, after witnessing Saddam's continued suppression of the Kurds and Shi'ites with his still-intact Republican Guard, the public felt that not enough had been done.

Conclusion. All of these factors would have led to a prolonged conflict for which even President Bush would have had great difficulty maintaining public support, particularly once U.S. casualties began to increase with little hope of achieving the objective. He was already under pressure as a result of the alleged "turkey shoot" near the end of the war.

"The withdrawing [Iraqi] forces were a disorderly rabble. They were trapped on the road to Basra and attacked by waves of aircraft, destroying hundreds of vehicles and causing thousands of casualties, in what was described as a 'turkey shoot'...President Bush, sensing that any more carnage would lead to public revulsion and, having been told that the coming hour would represent the land campaign's hundredth, called a halt."⁵²

Additionally, world opinion and support would have all but vanished if the U.S. had exceeded the limits of the UN resolutions. As General Schwartzkopf put it, "we had no authority to invade Iraq for the purpose of capturing the entire country or its capital...If we look back to the Vietnam War we should recognize that one of the reasons we lost world support for our actions was that we had no internationally recognized legitimacy for our intervention..."⁵³

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

Conclusion. The U.S.-led coalition could have prosecuted the war in the KTO for one or two more days without surpassing the culminating point of victory. However, raising the stakes to toppling Saddam and/or completely destroying his war-making capability would have caused the coalition to fracture, leaving the United States (and probably Great Britain) to go it alone. The resultant loss of regional (and world) political support, subsequent logistics problems caused by the withdrawal of Saudi support, and the waning support of an American public still smarting from its Vietnam experience, would have precluded the U.S. from prolonging the war any longer. The combined effect of the political fallout, logistics problems and loss of American will would have resulted in the U.S. forces surpassing the culminating point of victory before a continued offensive into Iraq even started.

Application. Every operational commander's goal is to achieve the objective *before* reaching the culminating point of victory, as the coalition did in liberating Kuwait through Operation Desert Storm. The operational commander must also be able to recognize when the culminating point of victory has been reached so as to avoid overshooting it in the event the objective has not been achieved, as the coalition most assuredly would have done had it expanded the objectives of Operation Desert Storm. And, finally, the operational commander must be cautious not to

expand or increase his objectives based solely on the preceding victory. This paper has addressed several factors that, although subtle, are critical for the operational commander to consider and recognize when determining if and when his forces have reached their culminating point of victory.

ENDNOTES

1. Carl Von Clausewitz, On War, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 56.
2. Bard E. O'Neill and Ilana Kass, "The Persian Gulf War: A Political-Military Assessment," Comparative Strategy, April/June 1992, p. 232.
3. It is necessary at this point to define the phrase "prolonging the war". The phrase generally encompasses a range of options from extending the war just a few more hours (to finish up current engagements) to extending it for just another day or two (in an attempt to break the back of the Iraqi forces, particularly Saddam's Republican Guard) to marching on Baghdad (for the purpose of toppling Saddam Hussein). There is a general consensus that a few more hours of "mopping up" action certainly was reasonable and within the capability of coalition forces. Therefore, for the purpose of this paper, "prolonging the war" will refer to any significantly greater military action to destroy the Iraqi forces and/or topple Saddam.
4. See Chapter Twenty-Two, Book Seven, "The Culminating Point of Victory" of Car Von Clausewitz's On War.
5. O'Neill and Kass, p. 17.
6. Clausewitz, pp. 566-567.
7. Although King Hussein of Jordan took much criticism for not joining the coalition against Saddam, he did not support Saddam to the extent that he could have been considered an ally.
8. Clausewitz, p. 569.
9. Joseph S. Nye, Jr. and Roger K. Smith, After The Storm. (Lanham, MD: Madison Books, 1992), p. 23.
10. Ibid., p. 23.
11. Ibid., pp. 23-24.
12. General H. Norman Schwarzkopf with Peter Petre, The Autobiography: It Doesn't Take A Hero. (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1992), p. 498.
13. Ibid., p. 498.
14. Ibid., p. 498.
15. U.S. News & World Report, Triumph Without Victory. (New York: Times Books, 1992) p. 395.

16. Ibid., p. 395.
17. Loss of the political support of these countries would have meant the loss of their critical logistic support. Chapter III discusses the logistical ramifications of losing the political support of the Gulf nations, particularly Saudi Arabia.
18. Schwartzkopf, p. 498.
19. Nye and Smith, p. 9.
20. Nye and Smith, pp. 9-10.
21. Interview with Dr. Robert S. Wood, Dean of Naval Warfare Studies, Naval War College, Newport RI: 21 April and 10 May 1993.
22. Nye and Smith, p. 13.
23. "Soviet Hawks Fly Again." The Economist, 23 February 1991, p. 22.
24. Carroll J. Doherty, "Iraqi Offer May Be Prelude To Diplomatic Bargaining," Congressional Quarterly, 16 February 1991, p. 424.
25. Nye and Smith, p. 20.
26. Ibid., p. 13.
27. Ibid., p. 21.
28. Norman Friedman, Desert Victory: The War for Kuwait (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1991), p. 411.
29. Clausewitz, pp. 566-567.
30. In response to criticisms that several units of the VII Corps almost ran out of fuel, Lt. General Pagonis, commanding general of the 22nd Support Command in Saudi Arabia, indicated that 300 5,000-gallon fuel tanks were only 25 miles away, standing by for instructions to move to any critical area on the battlefield. (See Lt. General Pagonis, "Moving Mountains," pp. 147-148.)
31. U.S. Department of Defense, Conduct of the Persian Gulf War: Final Report to Congress. (Washington: 1992), p. 416.
32. Lt. General William G. Pagonis with Jeffrey L. Cruikshank, Moving Mountains. (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1992), p. 147.
33. Ibid., p. 134.

34. Joseph L. Galloway, "The Point of the Spear," U.S. News & World Report, 11 March 1991, p. 36.
35. Ibid., p. 33.
36. Interview with Lt. Colonel David P. Oberthaler, Operations Faculty, Naval War College, Newport, RI: 22 April and 5 May 1993.
37. Pagonis, pp. 146-147.
38. Pagonis, pp 203-205. Lt. General Pagonis discusses at some length the U.S. shortages and reliance on the Saudis with respect to these three items, giving specific numbers to illustrate the severity of the shortages
39. Oberthaler Interview: 5 May 1993.
40. Clausewitz, p. 569.
41. Clausewitz, pp. 566-567.
42. Lara Marlowe and Frank Melville, "The Fruits of Interrogation," Time, 4 March 1991, p. 37.
43. Clausewitz, p. 569.
44. Richard Z. Chesnoff, "Behind the Lines," U.S. News & World Report, 11 March 1991, p. 47.
45. Galloway, p. 43.
46. Clausewitz, p. 570.
47. Interview with Commander Thomas Gallagher, III, Commanding Officer, USS Capodanno FF-1093, Newport, RI: 22 April 1993. Commander Gallagher was assigned to the Joint Staff (J-5, Political-Military Branch) during Desert Shield/Desert Storm and was heavily involved with the strategy and decision-making aspects of the war. In his opinion trying to get to Saddam through his tight security network would be virtually impossible. Additionally, in his book The Commanders, Bob Woodward also describes Saddam's tight security in a passage where he relates that only Saddam's security people know where he is at any given moment. (See Bob Woodward, The Commanders, (New York: NY, Pocket Books, 1992), p. 178).
48. Wood Interview: 10 May 1993.
49. Bobby R. Inman, et. al., "Lessons from the Gulf War," The Washington Quarterly, Winter 1992, p. 71.

50. "The Persian Gulf War," Gallup Poll Monthly, February, 1991, pp. 10 & 18.

Author's Note: The responses regarding length of the war and expected casualties appear to be based on the fighting to liberate Kuwait, not on the assumption or premise that the U.S. would continue fighting until Saddam was toppled or his war-making capability destroyed.

51. George Gallup, Jr. and Dr. Frank Newport, "Majority Says 'No' to Intervening On Behalf Of Iraqi Rebels, Gallup Poll Monthly, April 1991, pp. 2-5.

52. Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh, "How Kuwait Was Won: Strategy in the Gulf," International Security, Fall 1991, p. 34.

53. Schwartzkopf, p. 498.

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